

Phoenix

May 96

Rs 5-00

JOURNAL ON MUSIC & DANCE



While setting your jewellery with
fine quality

American Diamonds

Ask only for

Kumar Gems

Pioneers in the field of synthetic diamonds for
over two decades

Kumar Gems

SriLakshmi Vittobha Complex, 160 Big Bazar,
Tiruchirapally 620008 © 31359



N. Janardhan

PHOENIX

Journal on Music and Dance

S.N.Chandrasekhar
67 Basappa Layout
Bangalore 560018 ☎ 6675758
Editor

N.Sundarraaj
138, 5th Cross, Gandhinagar
Bangalore 560009 ☎ 2263696
Managing Editor

B. Rajashekar
☎ 2216459
Advertising Manager

Representatives

Ganapathi Bhat
Hubli -Dharwar
K. Ramamurthy Rao
Mysore

Gecta Raja
9 Chhaya, Jam-e-Jamshed Road
Matunga, Bombay 400019
☎ 412 2074

Annual Subscription: Rs 50-00
Three Years: Rs 140-00

Please send all remittances to
PHOENIX
The Circulation Manager
138, 5th Cross, Gandhinagar
Bangalore 560009 ☎ 2263696
(Cheques to be drawn on
'PHOENIX')

RN 45468/87

Vol 1

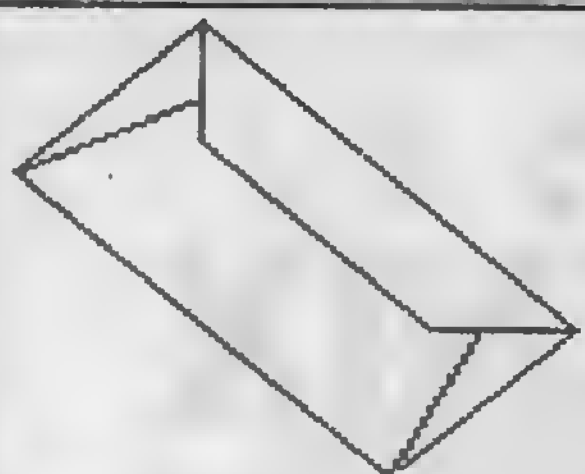
May 1996

No 7

Contents

4	Readers' Write
5	Editorial-Ferreting Talent
7	Three Phases of 'Shree'
8	Make up of a Green Room
9	MS - The Living Legend
12	Calling AIR
15	Vinayak Torvi wins Fans in Delhi
16	Workshops Galore

Cover Photo by
N.SUNDARRAJ



Readers Write

Jugalbandi

It is interesting to note the facts revealed on Jugalbandi, which still remains a controversial subject. Though many interpret in many terms, it is a thought provoking subject.

It is astonishing to note that R.K.Padmanabha, a vocalist gave a veena concert at Mysore (page 8 of March issue). I was taken aback to note R.K.Padmanabha is the son of R.S.Keshava Murthy

Murali, Mysore

(The veena concert was by R.K.Padmanabha of Mysore and not of Bangalore. The error is regretted.

Editor)

Good Editorial

Permit me to express my high appreciation at the get up and editorial contents you have been displaying in Phoenix.

I wish you continued success.

*R.Visweshwaran
Mysore*

Good Editorial

I am impressed by the varieties of features. May be you should have a section for the conceptional aspects, which will help to fill up the gaps left by teachers who teach kritis, or dance pieces without enlightening the students of the principles governing their composition. Perhaps, a little theory will make them better practitioners or at least fill them with a little confidence. By and by, 'Phoenix' may venture into the aspects of 'Natya' left out now.

Prof.M.S.Nagaraja,Bangalore

Congrats Venkatram

I have received Phoenix, what ever Venkatram does, he does it well and if I may say so, he breaths 'Sangeetham'. Perhaps he has offered his mind, body and soul to the 'Sangeetha Devatha'.

Karnatakam and especially the old Mysore State has produced so many brilliant and scholarly 'Vaggeyakars' and sangeetha vidwans. Dating back to Veena Seshanna, Bidaram Krishnappa, T. Chowdiah, Vasudevachar, Sadasiva Row and Bangalore Nagarathnammal.

Phoenix, I wish, should relate the articles of the old time masters for the benefit of the future younger generation.

*S.Rajagopalan
Madras*

Welcome

'Phoenix' is a welcome appearance and is well got up. May it flourish for the mythical period of six or seven centuries and continue thereafter too!

The Editor has commented '.... concede that artistes of Tamil Nadu are hard working, subscribe to a standard and aim at excellence . . . many of our musicians and dancers are not incapable of meeting such a challenge . . .'

May the challenge be taken seriously. If Madras is the Mecca of fine arts, Bangalore-Mysore could be made the Super-Mecca combining the glories of Mysore, Tanjore, Travancore and Vizianagaram given the will and a dozen enthusiasts to take the plunge. With its industrial affluence, patrons

and sponsors are yet to be tapped. May 1996-97 be the year of dedication!

*S.Rajagopalan
Madras*

Garlands

With help from B.V.K. Sastry, .Padma Murthy, Raghusutha and the AIR, I had addressed scores of artistes for helping me with their bio-data for inclusion in the pioneering, non-commercial 'Garland' series. Scores are yet to reply. Letters go unnoticed! Dr Sampat Kumaracharya wrote to me not to get disheartened since it had been his experience too. I have included scores of legendary and upcoming artistes of Karnataka in the volumes 'A Garland', 'Another Garland' and 'Yet Another Garland'. Now the last volume 'Fragrant Garland' is being got up. May I request artistes whose names are yet to be included to furnish full bio-data with specific periods before the end of May 1996. Such requests had been made through Sruti, the Hindu, Indian Express too. Now Phoenix reiterates it.

*S.Rajagopalan
Madras*

Much Needed

Congratulations on the launching of a new journal, "Phoenix".

A journal in music and dance was very much needed in India. Except for 'Sangeeth Natak', there is practically none. The journal of Indian Musicological Society, Baroda is only on music and like the Madras Music Academy journal, it publishes even non-research based articles.

'Shanmukha' too is a mixed fare. 'SRUTI' of course is a magazine of high repute. The first issue of 'Phoenix' too has the look of a magazine, I hope it will at least have one part reserved for research based articles. There really is a search of serious journals backed by good band of references.

N. Ramanathan, Madras

Editorial

Ferreting Talent

The annual music festival in connection with the Sri Ramanavami celebrations which extends to nearly a fortnight in some and to over a month in other localities in the City, has become a fertile ground to ferret talent. While many established musicians vie with one another to impress the discerning listener, a few organisations, notably the Ramaseva Mandali of Chamarajpet, throw open the arena for aspirants on the look out for opportunities. That indeed is an ideal way to scout talent, and if found promising, find ways and means of promoting it.

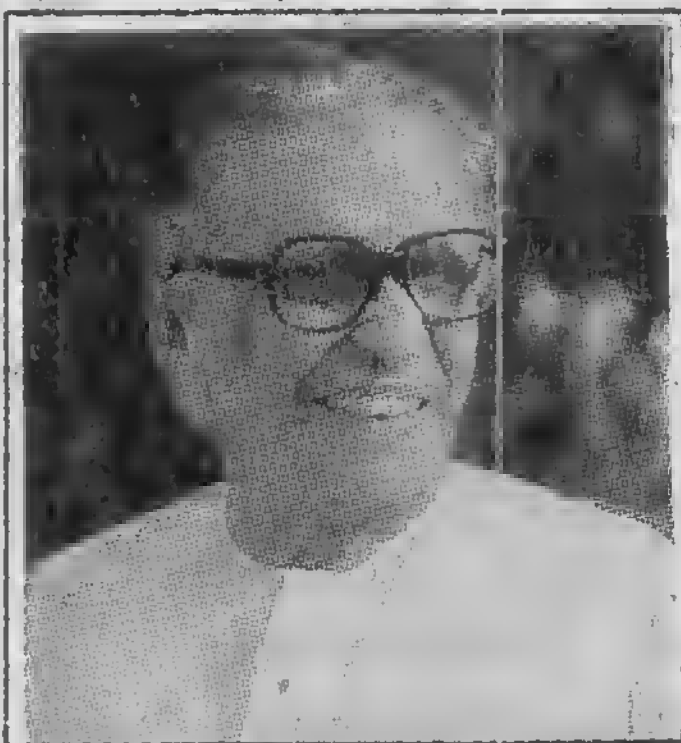
One big snag in the proposition is that it is not always that one comes across genuine talent. More often than not sheer obligation is the deciding factor. After all, not all forums have the means to keep track of talent and obligation can fulfil a dual purpose. But the consequences could be disastrous both to the sponsor and the incumbent.

In the last couple of years, including the season that is over recently, a few absolutely raw youngsters have managed to make their way to the dais. They were total greenhorns. The only saving grace in their case is that they hadn't mustered an audience that is outside the purview of their family. But the one who, in such circumstances, is put to embarrassment is the hapless Guru. Occasions are not wanting when the latter have faced music, unable to answer awkward questions of acquaintances as to how they had allowed a novice to make the bow. They have no escape other than pleading guilty, explaining how they are helpless victims in the presence of fond parents and dear ones who are overly enthusiastic in displaying a 'prodigy' of the family! Unfortunately, neither seem to realise that a premature exposure not only gives rise to a false pride that is detrimental to progress, but more importantly, the poor showing may lead to his blacklisting altogether. Such a fate has befallen more than one incumbent in the recent past.

The organisers also have a duty in this regard. It should not be forgotten that such performance may tell upon the very reputation of an organisation. Moreover, their efforts should not be purposeless. At least they should have the satisfaction of good listening and certainly not something from which one would run away! They must stick to some standard, if need be, by referring to the concerned gurus.

It is equally important for the organisers to see that the junior concerts are not light-hearted affairs. At any rate, not a formality, if the oft-repeated slogan "catch them young" has to have significance. The imperative need is to see that they have a sizeable audience, if need be, by making it obligatory for all the artistes billed in the slot to attend the concerts of their compeers. That is not asking much, but one that will usher in some seriousness which is so essential for the flowering of talent. Inculcating a habit of regularly listening to music is as important for progress in the art as going to the concert stage.

S.N.Chandrasekhar



COMMITTED TO TRAIN & TO ENTHRALL !

!!! FIRST OF ITS KIND IN INDIA !!!



NATYA INSTITUTE OF KATHAK & CHOREOGRAPHY

[Affiliated to Bangalore University & Recognised by Government of Karnataka]

invites application from DANCERS for

B.A DEGREE IN KATHAK & CHOREOGRAPHY

[Applicants should have passed 10+2 / P.U.C. or Equivalent]

The Degree Syllabus includes the following subjects :

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> World History of Dance | <input type="checkbox"/> Foundation & Diploma Course in Kathak |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Natyashastra | <input type="checkbox"/> Widely Travelled Performing Unit |
| <input type="checkbox"/> History of Art & Choreography | <input type="checkbox"/> Lecture-Demonstration & Workshops |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stage Design & Lighting | <input type="checkbox"/> Field Trips to Cultural Centres |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Music Composition | <input type="checkbox"/> Classes in Indian Martial Arts & Dances |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mime & Movement | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aesthetics | |

For Prospectus & further details contact :

Smt Maya Rao

Director

Natya Institute of Kathak & Choreography
37, 17th Cross, Malleswaram, Bangalore 560055
Karnataka ☎ 2263626

Hurry ! Last date for receiving applications June 30, 1996

Tuneful Encounters-5

Three Faces of "Shree"

S.N.Sivaswamy



Rajan Mishra and Sajan Mishra

The Raga "Shree" of the Hindusthani musical system occupies a very special corner in my musical nostalgia. I like its fascinating interplay of notes and the lingering quality of its preponderant swara RE ("Komal rishabh").

I have heard many exquisite renderings of the raga, but three of them, one very recent, have made indelible impressions on my mind.

One of them, and indeed the oldest, is the vintage treat provided by Pandit D.V. Paluskar, "Harikecharana" on his rare L.P record. As was his wont, Paluskar has made the whole essay popular and palpable to even uninitiated ears. What makes the raga come alive in that record is Paluskar's sincere effort to keep his scholarship in the background and portray the sound of the raga in the simplest idioms.

My second lasting experience with the raga was also on a beautiful

L.P record, which is a rendering on Surbahar and Sitar respectively by Imrat Hussain Khan (brother of the legendary sitarist Vilayat Khan). Unlike Paluskar's, Imrat Khan's treatment of the raga is verily an exhibition of the dexterity of his skilled fingers. I had heard him play "Shree" on the Sitar even before I acquired the L.P, on the radio, in a National Programme, when, for almost the entire duration of the concert, Imrat Khan spun the magic of the raga and sent me searching for its recording, if any. After a long search, I found the record in a Calcutta music shop.

Throughout the first side of the record Imrat Khan has played on the Surbahar, a well thought out and expansive alap, and on the other side, he has played on the Sitar, first a slow and then a fast 'gat'. He has explored the depths of the raga, particularly during the alap, treating us with a masterly flow of 'meends' and 'gamaka's'.

Imrat Khan has concentrated on the delineation of "Komal Rishabh" tirelessly and developed "Tivra Nishad" and "Tivra Madhyam" to squeeze out all their nuances. In the process, he has provided a feast of melody. At the end, the intricate "taan" patterns he has created in breath-taking speed leave us spellbound.

While I have repeatedly enjoyed listening to Paluskar's 'Shree' and Imrat Khan's 'Shree', I wonder when I would have a second opportunity of listening to Rajan Mishra and Sajan Mishra singing the raga, my latest chance to be thrilled by it. Rajan Mishra and Sajan Mishra had chosen 'Shree' as the main raga of their concert on the penultimate day of the recent Ramanavami Music Festival at the Fort Maidan in Bangalore.

Gifted with rich, vibrant voices, the Mishra brothers were in full form that day and served us a remarkably beautiful exposition of 'Shree' leaving their audience craving for more!

RMV Sangeetha Sabha

Rajmahal Vilas Sangeetha Sabha, Bangalore was inaugurated by Veena Maestro V.Doreswamy Iyengar on January 26, 96.

Aiming to cater to the cultural needs of Sanjay Nagar, Dollar Colony, Postal Colony, New BEL Road, Naga Shetty Halli, UAS Layout and surrounding areas, the Sabha will conduct music concerts on the last Friday of the month from 4.15 to 6.45 PM at the Ragothaman Memorial Building, RMS Colony, RMV II Stage.

V.Doreswamy Iyengar and D. Balakrishna, M.S. Sheela, Sikkil Mala Chandrashekar and M.Nagaraj-M. Manjunath have given concerts under its auspices.

M.V. Subramanya

In Lighter Vein

Make-Up of a Green Room

Manu Vijay



Make up rooms, I suppose, are 'made' with a purpose. The 'green' rooms artistes encounter, often baffle the mind. If they are, indeed to allow the dancer to prepare herself for the performance ahead; should they not provide her with the amenities for the same? How could a grey room with huge open windows overlooking a field of congress grass, with a mirror that could drive Sushmita Sen to insanity, pass off as a green room, I wonder! I don't suppose the reference could be to the moss, I found growing on the walls of one of the well known 'green' rooms I once had the good fortune of visiting.

Green rooms, like everything else in India, can be classified and sub-classified. There are those that are

designed to make the dancer feel like a princess. They resemble the tower of a fairy tale castle, spiral staircase and all. A dancer's energies, rather than being spent on a strenuous thillana, is spent weaving her way up the labyrinthine steps to powder her nose. On the other hand, there is that green room which resembles a dungeon. One would expect to encounter a prisoner in chains, rather than a graceful dancer attired in silks. The steps in this instance, are large and dark, and lead down into the earth.

Of course, every dancer has encountered the green room that gives her the impression of a candle lit ambience. She has just the one 20 watt bulb, and has to squint to wear her eye-liner. Then there is one that resembles a moon lit night. There are

so many tube lights, that our dancer looks a little blue when she makes her appearance on stage.

Dance in an exhibition or pandal, and you will be presented with a green room that will feel like you are dressing up in a stadium - there are spectators to watch the show! There is of course, the mother of all green rooms, the one without the mirror. Dancers, carry a compact mirror in your hand bag. It would come in handy at times such as this.

Besides these broad classifications, you could find green rooms with micc, with cockroaches, with rain storms and desert conditions, with water overflowing from the sink, or dripping from the tap, etc. I am still on the lookout for the green room that will give me the five star comforts of mirror, light, water, easy access and hygiene!

Next Issue

Cover story on Bharatana-
tyam and Kathak dancer
Pratibha.

Report on 15th Talavadyo-
tsav 96

Calling AIR

Cassette Causerie

Kathak workshop held at
Hubli

Bombay's concert scene by
Geetha Raja

Know your artistes and City
round-up

MS- the Living Legend

S.N.Chnadraseshkar

"What a great relief from the vocal and rhythmic pyrotechnics! Here was real music, music that is sublime, music for the soul. One could experience its enduring quality. All that is needed is the accent on raga and bhava".

That was an outburst of the redoubtable T. Chowdiah, after he had accompanied M.S. Subbulakshmi the living legend, on the violin in a concert. Recounting the incident, the veteran veena artiste V. Doreswamy Iyengar explained how the violin maestro was beside himself while expressing his admiration for MS as an artiste of refinement.

It is no secret that it is anathema for many a male violinist to accompany a female artiste. It is infra-dig for them, though some ascribe the high pitch as the problem. The case with the mridangist is also not much different, unless it becomes inescapable as it happened in the case of the great Palghat Mani Iyer, who in his later years condescended to play for D.K. Pattammal, his 'Sammandi'. The situation remains much the same even today.

There have been exceptions among violinists too. Notable among the seniors was R.K. Venkatarama Sastry who had enjoyed the privilege

of providing violin accompaniment for MS for long, V.V. Subramaniam being the other. RKV's mentor Chowdiah joined the tribe much later in his career and once he started on the course, there was no going back. The combination was as memorable as it had been when he accompanied all-time greats like Madurai Mani Iyer, Chembai, Ariyakudi and GNB.

Here are two more instances to show how the music of MS could move the learned and the laity alike. A cricket eleven had just returned after a fixture in the day. As the team entered the gates of its captain's house,

the famous Meera bhajan, "Hari Tuma Haro" sung by MS wafted the evening air. The disc was being played inside the house. As the rendition reached its climax, one of the players involuntarily exclaimed 'ayo'. Some passers by on the adjacent road rushed in to enquire what had happened. When explained, an elder among them agreed that it was natural as soulful music can stir the emotions of even the uninitiated!

The experience of the learned is more interesting. The occasion was the 80th birthday celebrations of Dr D.V. Gundappa, the doyen of Kannada

literature. A concert by MS in the evening was part of the day-long function. As usual, the concert was a real treat, at the end of which MS took up the cymbals to intone "Dasana Madiko" (Nadanamakriya), one of her favourite Dasara padas. The lilt in the rhythm was so irresistible for DVG, that he suddenly got up from his seat and started dancing! It had moved him immensely. Indeed, it was a sight for the gods, with many in the packed Town Hall clapping to keep the beat!

It was that haunting voice, coupled with its sensitive appeal and evocative intonation that made Mahatma Gandhi exclaim that he would



rather have his favourite Meera bhajan "Hari Tuma Haro" spoken by MS than sung by another. That was his reaction when told that MS was not familiar with the song and that someone else could render it.

It is the same mesmerising effect that had prompted Sarojini Naidu to pass on the epithet "Nightingale" to MS. That again was the music that had moved Jawaharlal Nehru to muse, "Who am I, but a Prime Minister before this queen of melody".

A more fitting tribute had come from Ramakrishna Hegde, when he was the Chief Minister of Karnataka. He was the chief guest at a function at the local branch of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan to celebrate the 75th birthday of MS. Felicitating her Hegde remarked whether the powers that be recognised it or not, "She was the real 'Bharata Ratna'".

It is intriguing that it should be the only distinction (discontinued since a couple of years) which has remained elusive for her. Perhaps she should be holding a record (seven in all) for winning the largest number of honorary doctorates, including those of the Madras University (1987) and Shantiniketan (1991). She has been decorated with the President's award and the Padmabhushan, besides the Kalidas (1988) and the Konark (1991) Sammans. In 1974 she was made the Fellow of the Central Sangeet-Natak Akademi. To crown it all, MS was the first woman artiste to preside over the annual music conference of the Music Academy, Madras, thus receiving the coveted title Sangeeta Kalanidhi. And her performing record itself is mind-boggling, taking one to the remotest cultural centres of the world.



M.S. in 1956

It is a truism that music, and almost music alone, has the abstract quality for the artiste to appeal directly to his audience. Hence its universality and no other artiste has proved this point more emphatically than MS. An MS concert in a northern city in India has at all times drawn as large an audience as in the south and as appreciative of her music as it does a Bhimsen Joshi's, a Jesraj's, a Bade Gulam Ali's or a Ravishankar's. In her case the congnescienti has ceased to see any distinction in style. It is good, soulful music, music that is profound and enduring.

Till the advent of MS on the western music scene, Indian music for the westerner meant Hindustani instrumental, thanks to the influence of the two wizards, Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar. Listeners in Europe and America hardly knew anything of the complex Carnatic mode. But after the concert of MS at the Edinburgh Festival and later at the UN General Assembly, the whole complexion

changed, much to the delight of the well-known musicologist C.V. Narasimhan who was at the time UN Chef de Cabinet and at whose instance the UN concert was organised. As it happened in respect of Swami Vivekananda's address to the Parliament of Religions at Chicago, almost a century before, there was ecstatic reaction to her concert. The Press acclaimed it as a unique experience for the world body. Concert bookings for MS followed from all important cities of the US, including the Carnegie Foundation. M.S. had won the hearts of millions of music-lovers in America.

The best tribute came from the New York Times which said: "Subbulakshmi's vocal communication transcends words. The cliché of the voice used as an instrument seemed never more appropriate. Subbulakshmi and her ensemble are a revelation to the western world."

Music had come naturally to this genius of song. She was the daughter of (Veena) Shanmugha Vadivu, a well-known artiste of her day. She was well-versed both in the veena and vocal, always vocalising whatever she played on the veena. MS inherited her mother's dulcet voice, honing it to attain greater sensitivity and sophistication. As their home in Madurai all through the day bubbled with a musical aura, great names in the genre frequenting the doyen's home to exchange views on the art, it was possible for MS to imbibe all the finer points of music to emerge as a chiselled artiste. Opportunities to display her talent were also there for the asking and it did not take long for MS to win recognition as a vocalist of promise.

Her mellifluous voice had naturally opened the doors of the tinsel world for her. The films in which she appeared were instant successes, the prodigious number of songs being their main attraction. Her first film "Seva Sadan" had scored more than 20 songs, each a hit. A Carnatic classical like "Needucharana" (Kalyani), almost a forgotten number today, became as popular as the Hindustani piece "Shyama Sundara Madanamohana", a masterpiece of Narayanarao Vyas from whom MS had learnt it. Indeed, her knowledge of Hindustani style was of no mean order as she from time to time had learnt the intricacies of the style from stalwarts like Bade Ghulam Ali, Siddeswari Devi and others for the sake of exemplifying the compositions in Hindi and other north Indian languages in the distinct hue.

It was again her songs which had enhanced the commercial prospects of films like "Savitri", "Shakuntala" and last but not the least "Bhakta Meera", the last in both Tamil and Hindi. As Narada in the first and in

the title role in the two others, the producers had exploited every opportunity to introduce a song for MS and nothing suited her and her audience better too. Her co-stars were all proven celebrities (GNB who appeared opposite her in Shakuntala was the only fresher) in the cine world. Y.V. Rao, Shanta Apte, C. Nagaiah and Sherakalathur Shama were popular names in the films. But MS had stolen a march over each one of them by her sheer magnetic presence and melodic aria. Indeed, if she had continued in that glamour world, her fortunes would have been as affluent and fame as awe-inspiring. Then it would have certainly been a great loss to the world of classical music. It is here that T. Sadashivam, her astute husband deserves full compliments. It was he who had planned her later films with a specific purpose. When the purpose was fulfilled, it was he who steered her future as a vocalist of repute. Since their marriage in 1940 he has been her friend, philosopher and guide, rightly described as the architect of her career, a glorious one

at that.

It was at his instance that numerous endowments for religious, national and educational cause were created, beginning with the Kasturba Smarak Nidhi. The Sri Ramakrishna Mission and the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan are the other notable institutions which have benefited by the couple's munificence.

The repertoire of MS is verily inexhaustive. Besides a wide-ranging variety of classical compositions, she is a veritable storehouse of bhajans in almost all the Indian languages. Many of them are available in discs and cassettes. But the most popular of them all are: Sri Venkateswara Suprabhatam, Shankara's Bhajagovindam and Sri Vishnu Sahasranamam. They can be heard at all venues and at all times of the day, evoking a sense of reverence in the listener. They, indeed, will keep the name of M.S. Subbulakshmi ever green in the memory of generations to come!



This issue on M.S. Subbulakshmi is sponsored by Sudha Rao and A.H. Rama Rao, Rama Sudha Charitable Trust, Bangalore.

Calling AIR

Not unoften a listener who switches on the radio for music without knowing who the artiste is, would continue listening for two good reasons. The first obviously is because the music is eminently enduring. The other is to figure out the artiste who has made a grade despite being below par.

A listener recently had to contend with one too many cases in the second category. Surprisingly, the slots of these artistes indicated that they were in the higher grade. In actuality it is difficult to conceive how any of them could have made a grade at all!

Usha Ramamurthy (April 23, 10-10 am) takes the cake in this list. She is a gottuvadyam artiste, an instrument which has few adherents. The flourish in her playing also can vouch

for a long stint. But the music had no bearing. Neither Ramamanohari nor



Rajalakshmi Tirunarayan

Madhyamavati (Ramakatha) could speak for fidelity of form, swaras at random straying into the melodies. It is difficult to conceive how she could have been considered for a one-hour slot.

As conveniently avoidable are two vocalists, Ambuja Narayanan and Lalita Mohan who were featured at about the same time. They were mediocre to say the least and how such ablaunt ridden music could escape the notice of an audition panel is a mystery! Indeed such music can do credit neither to the artistes themselves nor to the medium sponsoring it.

R.V. Dakshinamurthy's veena (March 15, 8-30 am) was no more convincing, but certainly of some substance. His alap for Mohana was not free from slips, but the kriti Bhavanuta almost make up for the lapse. His Thillana (Darbari-Kanada) was reassuring.



A.V. Krishnamachar

It is at such depressing moments that a refreshing fare like that of Sita Rajan (Madras, 8-30 am the same day) brings relief. Her Surati (Sri Venkatesha) testified for sustained 'sadhakam' and aesthetic perception. What a contrast Padma Narayan's evocation for Bilahari (Idu Bhagya-Idu Bhagya) next morning was. Her Pantuvarali (Ramanatham) was as pedestrian, utter lack of concern for 'Srutu' reducing her efforts to nought.

Rajalakshmi Tirunarayan in her veena (March 17, 8-30 am) again proved that she is consistent. If her Begada (Vallabhanakasya) stood out for her cool, calm disposition, Saveri (Sri Kamakoti) reverberated with glowing cadences of the melody. Later at 10-10 am the same morning, M.S. Sheela (who is presently on a concert tour of the US) gave another impressive performance in company with Nalina Mohan on Violin. The opening Abhogi kriti Sri Ramya Chitta was one of the cleanest pictures of the raga. Sheela's alap for Thodi (Sharadeye) had all the lyrical endearments of the raga. It was good



Saroja Natarajan

music, a perfect 'sruti' and meaningful 'gamakas' accounting for an elegant coherence. Nalina's accompaniment was as competent.

A.V. Krishnamachar in his violin solo (March 18, 8-30 am) was in fine touch. While Vagadeswari was rendered with great restraint, his Nadanamakriya, a graceful melody which has receded to the background, was marked for its depth of technique and imagination. But V.N. Padmini who followed him at 9-30 am could not rise above the pedestrian. The Kannada piece in Malayamaruta could not shape well either in melodic grace or lyrical appeal. The gestalt appeared more convincing in Dwaitamusukha (Ritigoula).

Dwadasha Ranjani, a conglomeration of 12 variations of Ranjini was the highlight is the National Programme of Trichy Sisters (S. Prema, S. Jaya) on March 16. The duo synchroise well as evidenced in the opening number in Gambhiranata. Idisamayamu in Natakapiya was rendered with as much patience and insight. But their alap for Kalyani (Nijadasavarada) was hardly evocative, though the kriti had its lyrical flavour. But the lilting gait in the rare Ranjini combine was very interest-



M. Roopa



Shanti Rao

ing, each variation showing a distinct character.

Shanti Rao's veena recital (March 19, 9-30 am) took off on a vibrant note with Sarasiruha (Nata). Pantuvarali was dignified in its portrayal, the kriti Ramanatham anchored with a flurry of glowing 'sargams'. Revathi Murthy also veena (March 20, 8-30 am) was as competent. Her alap for Bhairavi was noted for its purity of style, especially in the 'thanam' aspect. But the rendition of the kriti Upacharamu was uninspiring due to some slips. G.R. Jaya at 9-30 am on the same day started off in style with Budhamashrayami (Natakuranji). Her alap for Pantuvarali was also neat, though short of resonance. But her voice showed signs of strain in the 'tarasthayi' as she rendered the kriti Ninnunera. She is no doubt capable of more solid singing.

The Darbar Varnam (Chalamela) gave the father and daughter violin duet of Mysore Mahadevappa and Rupa a rollicking start (March 22, 8-30 am). They combined well, the alap for Mohana and the kriti that followed testifying to a very professional standard. It was a pleasant recital. Saroja Natarajan who was featured later (9-30 am) was her sure self as she intoned Charukeshi (Kripayapalaya). The rendition sounded a trifle

screechy in the upper octave, but certainly not but out of tune. The Kannada ditty Mareyabeda could not make an impact either lyrically or in raga-bhava.

As unevocative was M. Ramesh (March 23, 8-30 am). Be it Bilahari (Tolijanma) or Malayamaruta, the rendition reeked in 'besur', rendering the recital a futile exercise. Concurrently Raji Gopalakrishnan was on the air from Madras station. What a relief it was to listen to her tidy 'sruti' which made all the difference. Her alap for Karaharapriya was noted for its modal fidelity, the rare kriti Srinivasa Tava Charanam enriched with some scintillating 'niraval' and swara passages.

The National programme on March 23 featured a flute recital by Prakash Vadera. His Shuddha Kalyan was impressive, Prakash giving equal importance to both the 'gayaki' and 'been' ang. His blowing was steady, soft nuances adding to the dignity of the melody. He concluded with a piece in Chandra-kaus which had the customary 'chalan' in it.

At 10-10 am next morning, a senior artiste T. Sharada played on the veena. Unusually, it was a shaky



Revathi Murthy

start, Bhajare, the Athana piece not showing touch. The familiar Ninnuchepaka (Mandari) was in a better shape. It was only in Shankarabharana that the veteran settled down. The alap itself was full of glowing 'sancharas', the meaningful stasis in the delineation of the kriti, adding to its convincing imagery. But H.T. Ramaswamy's vocal (March 26, 8-30 am) fell short in its resonance, confirming that he has passed his best. His Kalyani piece could sustain almost entirely because of M. Nagaraj's violin liltig forays.

The flute recital of M.K. Pranesh (March 26, 9-30 am) showed great promise. Sangeetagnanam (Dhanyasi) revealed that he has a smooth blowing technique, though it loses steadiness in the upper reaches. His Kalyani (Srimadadi) stood out for its graceful cadences. This despite a mediocre violin support he received.

On March 29 (8-30 am) one chanced to hear an authoritative Abheri of Voleti Venkateswarulu on the Madras AIR. The alap was elaborate with stasis on the salient endearments of the melody.

It was a nostalgic experience, the kriti Nagumomu itself taking one back to the halcyon days of the great Musuri. The latter's recording could be heard a day or two earlier (March 24). The inimitable style came to the fore in Janaranjini and Saranga. The mainstay, however was Bhairavi (Neeepadamulanu), and what a memorable treat it was, especially with stalwarts like Lalgudi Jayaraman (violin) and Trichy Shankaran (mridangam) enriching the denouement!

But there was hardly much to write home about the National Programme (March 20). The Hindustani vocal by S.S. Avasti was just ordinary, neither Maru-Bhag nor



R.A. Ramamani

Kiravani taking the discerning listener beyond the routine chords. It was pleasant without being scholarly. Nor was the South Zone Hook-up the next day by Bhanumathi Visvanath much different. She has a sweet voice, but the singing lacks depth, though the Arabhi piece did give her a sprightly start. Nectimati was equally convincing. But it was a testing time to identify Harikambodi in her rendition of Entara Nee. The distortion marred the earlier opinion no end!

It is in such depressing situations that a classic treat like the flute recording of B.N. Suresh (April 2, 8-30 am) refreshes. Be it the inspiring Kambodi varna or the celebrated Dachuko (Thodi), the gestalt in the attractive phraseology was complete, accounting for depth. The Nitimati piece was as edifying.

The customary verve in R.A. Ramamani's rendition (April 3, 8-30 am) of Anandabhairavi (Sri Ramachandra) lent an excellent start for her. Vachaspati (Kantachuda) was attended to in greater detail, though the Swaraprasthara appeared a trifle

long. It is in this aspect that Chitra Lingam's veena recital (same night at 9-30 pm) seemed better planned. The Bhag Varnam provided an ideal tempo, Sri Gananatha the Malahari masterpiece augmenting the 'mela'. The alap for Shankarabharana, deftly supplemented with a neat Thanam and a Pallavi in the simple 'rupaka' tala could stand the test of both artistic finesse and technical necessity.

As satisfying was the violin solo (Hindustani style) of Prakash Sontakke (April, 10-30 pm) Yaman was the rag the youngster had opted for the day. Though the initial strokes were hesitant, once he drifted into the two-tiered 'gat' there was no lack of coherence in his music. It was a reassuring recital, especially in an instrument which is not as popular in the Hindustani style as in its Carnatic counterpart.

That popularity and that expertise is evidenced in good measure in a solo of M. Nagaraj (April 5, 8-30 am). The opening Shobillu (Jaganmohini) itself revealed that the young master was in the right spirit. His alap for Harikambodi visualised the elegant picture of the melody, the familiar kriti Ramanannu enriching its lyrical overtones. That was a class apart!

ESSENCE

Agenda for June

On June 30, 96 Rama and Chandrika sings at the Devagiri Sangitha Sabha, Banashankari II Stage, Bangalore under the aegis of Sri D Subbaramiah Fine Arts Trust and Devagiri Sangeetha Sabha, accompanied by Suneetha (violin), Vinod (mridangam) and Sampath-kumar Sharma (morsing).

Vinayak Torvi wins Fans in Delhi



Vinayak Torvi

It is nothing surprising that Pandit Vinayak Torvi, the well-known Hindusthani vocalist of Bangalore, should have created an indelible impression on the Delhi audience recently. His concert for the three-day Vasantotsava of Seher at the India International Centre, by all accounts was an instant success, one worthy of an artiste who is acclaimed as one of the leading lights of the present gen-

eration of Hindusthani musicians.

What is surprising however is that organisers in Delhi should have taken so long to recognise an artiste of his stature, an artiste who has won the hearts of connoisseurs all over the country, including those in Pune, Mumbai and Calcutta besides known centres of his home state.

His was rightly the inaugural concert. Vinayak intoning with an impactful Yaman Kalyan. The depth of his voice, taut 'taans', and brilliant bol-taans embellishing the 'bhadat' mesmerised the expectant listeners. Repeated applause and 'wah wah's' greeted the succinct 'layakari'.

Tilak Kamod, almost a forgotten melody, soon followed, Vinayak melodising the raag with a high degree of sensitivity. A well-known composition of the late Vinayachandra Moudgalya, a musicologist of yester years, was sensitised as effectively.

In keeping with the spirit of the season, the crisp alap doing full justice to Basant the 'uttarang pradhan' rag. The Basant atmosphere was almost palpable to the touch as Vinayak intoned "Paduva Brij Dekhana", the piece evoking memories of the late Abdul Karim Khan. Vinayak rounded off his inaugural outing in Delhi with a popular Mera bhajan in Jogia, soaked in 'Bhakti' ras.

No wonder that many in the packed auditorium were remorseful that they had missed listening to such a refined artiste for so long. Nor were they fully aware of the signal contribution Karnataka musicians had made to the Hindusthani style!

Torvi himself is one of the many such stalwarts. Though a banker, his dedication to music is total. It is only natural that he is decorated with honours by a number of organisations. To name only a few: the coveted Rajyotsava award, felicitation by the Mico Fine Arts Society and the Aryabhata Cultural Organisation and conferment of the title "Gana Gandharva" and Surmanai award of the Sur-Singar Samsad, Mumbai.

Keerti S Badseshi



Saraswathi Gana Sabha, Bangalore organised, 'Swara Laya Sangama', an ensemble of ghatam and morching at Odakathur Mutt, on March 4, 96.

Leading ghatam artiste, Sukanya Ramagopal played five ghatams, accompanied by B. Bhagyalakshmi, B. Rajasekar and L. Bhimachar on morsing.

Dear Reader

Your comments and views are most valuable to us and the others too. We shall gladly publish the best. But, for maximum impact and early coverage, make them brief. Send your comments to:

The Editor
PHOENIX
138, 5th Cross
Gandhinagar
Bangalore 560009

Workshops Galore



The popular response at the increasing number of workshops in music and dance in the City is a sure indication of the growing interest of youngsters in the twin arts. Till recently, the concept was familiar only in the spheres of Carnatic music and Bharathanatyam.

Now it has spread to the realm of Hindustani music too, Vinayak Torvi of the Gururao Deshpande Sangeetha Sabha giving the lead. The refresher course Pandit Yashwant Bua Joshi of Bombay conducted for him recently was a great success going by the keen interest evinced by the aspirants and

Lalgudi Jayaraman's well attended Workshop



Yashwant Bua Joshi's Workshop

the regularity of the one-week course.

It was an interesting experience to sit through the training where the youngsters joined the Guru to master some familiar ragas like Bageshri, Kedar and Tilak-Kamod besides some morning melodies. The discussion on the different approaches in the 'Gharanas' was as educative.

If Torvi's workshop was for a week, the one sponsored by Suma Sudheendra's Tarangini Fine Arts, with violin maestro Lalgudi Jayaraman in charge, was limited to five days. Yet its utility certainly

cannot be under estimates, as both the teacher and the taught went whole hog to make the best use of the opportunity. Jayaraman had taken care to see that all the 40 aspirants had learnt the two varnams, two kritis and two Thillanas to his satisfaction.

The intensive training in Bharathanatyam conducted by Padmini Rao of Ponnaiah Lalitkala Academy was different in more than one sense. The duration was of three weeks and the number was restricted to less than 10 so as to see each student got individual attention. The training included both theory and practical, covering the entire gamut of the art. Though arduous, the budding dancers seemed to enjoy every moment of the six hour during each day!

Indian Music

Aspmprpis say
Existent from the dawn of
Human civilisation.
Nurtured from bygone days
The vedictimes, the fresh seedlings
of music, a golden treasure,
A glory from the hoary past.
Our prophets, Tansen,
Thyagaraju,
Mirabai, Tukaram, Purandara
Dasu,
Ramadas, Annamacharya and
Balamurali Krishna a master from
the new generation,
Carry Indian music, a mighty
Ganges
Flowing, gurgling, splashing
All in supreme bliss and serenity
A melody ever invigorating
from eternity to eternity.

Support

PHOENIX

Know your Artistes

B.Dhruvaraj



B.Dhruvaraj

B.Dhruvaraj (35), one of the prominent mridangam players of younger generation is the son of morching vidwan L.Bimachar. He learnt mridangam from late H. Puttachar for 16 years and had advance training under the renowned Ramanathapuram C.S. Muragabhu-pathi.

Dhruvaraj achieved the technique of playing soft and perfect strokes to the core. He does not overshadow the main artiste. He is known for skillful solo playing in thani avarthanam which is balanced.

Dhruvaraj has accompanied most leading artistes in the state. There are few sabhas or festivals in Karnataka where Dhruvaraj has not participated. He has toured South Africa and Maritius.

Dhruvaraj is a commerce graduate of the Bangalore University and a rank holder in vidwat examination in instruments conducted by the Government of Karnataka. He is a B High artiste in Akashavani and has participated in AIR and Doordarshan concerts regularly.

Very soft spoken and mild mannered Dhruvaraj is a jeweller by profession running a well known jewellery firm. He also teaches mridangam.

B.Dhruvaraj
5 Pillappa Lane, Nagarthpet Cross,
Bangalore 560002
☎ 2215853 (R), 2216459 (O)

Omkar

Ghatam artiste Omkar(23), had initial training in mridangam under V.R. Chandralekha and later came into the fold of T.A.S. Mani, Karnataka College of Percussion, Bangalore.

Omkar has passed the music examination conducted by the Government of Karnataka with distinction and has won many prizes during his college days. He has won an award in percussion competition conducted by the South Central Zone Cultural Centre held at Elur. He is a scholarship holder from Karnataka Sangeetha Nruthya Academy.

A popular artiste, he has accompanied many veteran artistes in leading music organisations regularly. He



Omkar



M.S. Ramprasad

is a B-grade artiste of All India Radio in mridangam and morching.

Omkar has toured Japan along with a team of percussion artistes for the music festival "Min On" in 1993 representing Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). He plays regularly for 'Tala Tarangini', a percussion ensemble directed by his guru T.A.S. Mani.

Omkar is a science graduate of Bangalore University.

G. Omkar
99, III Cross, 8th Main, Jakkasandra Block, Koramangala, Bangalore
560034 ☎ 553 8164

M.S. Ramprasad

M.S. Ramprasad (30), a more popular name in light music arena, is a multi talented artiste well known as a singer, composer, music director and a conductor of light music ensembles.

Born and brought up in the family of musicians Ramaprasad learnt mridangam under Vasudeva Rao Mohite from 1970 and later from Salem S Kannan. Ramprasad is a graduate from the National College, Bangalore. He has won prizes in many inter collegiate competitions.

Ramprasad has accompanied many leading musicians including Kadri Gopalnath, Nagavalli Nagaraj and others.

He developed a taste for light music in 1988 and has presented musical features in AIR, Bangalore. He came to limelight when he composed and scored background music for a drama "Katthale Dari Doora" played by the National College's troupe in the Inter Colligate Drama Competition.

He launched 'Swara Milana', a light music troupe with two of his friends. He is a B-High for Akashvani music composer.

Under his directorship an audio-cassette, 'Bhavayana' was released in February this year.

M.S. Ramprasad
9/1A Krishna Road, Basavanagudi,
Bangalore 560004

A.P.Rao
741, 'Abhiman', 7th Cross
III Block, Koramangala
Bangalore 560034 ☎ 5532658

Academy Scholarships

Karnataka Sangeetha Nrithya Academy invites application from Mrudangam artists and Vocalists who have passed the vidwat grade examination, for a nine month practical training in classical music and dance from July 96.

Selected candidates between 25 and 45 years are entitled for a stipend.

For Application contact:
Registrar, Karnataka Sangeetha
Nritya Academy, 14/3 Canara Finance
Corporation Building, Nrupatunga
Road, Bangalore 560001

Shimoga Fetes Thitte Krishna Iyengar

An eight day festival of music and dance was organised by the Keertisesha B. Doreswamy Iyengar Trust at Shimoga from March 20, 96.

Shankaran Nambudri gave excellent performance, ably supported by Mysore Dayakar (violin) and B.R. Sridhar (mrudangam). On the second day, a fine Bharatanatyam programme by Prathibha Prahlad was organised, which was appreciated. Prathibha, a leading Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi artiste has contributed a lot to the field of dance and music, through her "Prasiddha Foundation".

Thitte Krishna Iyengar, a 95 years old musician of Mysore, was honoured in the presence of music lovers. Sheshadri Gavai Ex Chairman of Karnataka Sangeetha Nruthya Academy was the chief guest.

Krishna Iyengar was presented with a garland, a shawl and a citation by the chairman of the trust, M. Bharadwaj. Later, Iyengar thrilled the audience with a vocal performance for two hours.

On the fourth day, a grand vocal recital by Unnikrishnan was presented, assisted by G. Chandra Mouli (violin), J. Vaidyanathan (mrudangam) and B.S. Purushotham (kanjira).

On the fifth day Vijay Siva gave a vocal recital, assisted by G. Chandra Mouli (violin) J. Vaidyanathan (mrudangam) and B.S. Purushotham (kanjira).

On Monday, March 25, S. Soumya of Madras gave an excellent vocal recital with her sweet and melodious voice. She was ably assisted by Ganesh Prasad (violin) and Sainath on (mrudangam). On March 26, Naiveli Santhana-gopalan in his recital was in his elements.

The festival concluded with Sanjay Subramanyam's vocal assisted by Vittal Ramamurthy (violin) and Naiveli Narayanan (mrudangam).

This unique day festival attracted a large number of local music lovers and those of adjoining Malnad district.

M. Bharadwaj

Subscribe to **PHOENIX**

a monthly on Music and Dance

Annual Subscription: Rs 50-00

Three Years : Rs 140-00

It reaches you by post every month

PHOENIX

138 5th Cross, Gandhinagar, Bangalore 560009 ☎ 2263696
(Cheques should be drawn on "PHOENIX")

LAKSHMI JEWELLERY COMPANY

Manufacturing Jewellers for over 55 years

Dealers in:

Precious and Semi Precious Stones

Manufacturers of:

Shields, Trophies, Lapel Badges and Medals

LAKSHMI JEWELLERY COMPANY

NAGARTHPET, BANGALORE 560002

© 2212635 Estd 1940